

Opening Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Markup of the Discussion Draft to Reauthorize the Satellite Television Extension and
Localism Act
March 24, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today we are taking the next step in the process toward re-authorizing the law that ensures that 1.5 million subscribers in hard-to-reach areas continue to receive broadcast content via their chosen satellite providers.

To get to this point, this Subcommittee has held four hearings during this Congress alone, as well as additional hearings on the state of the video market in the previous Congress. Based on the information that we gathered in several of those hearings, Chairman Upton and I have announced that we would launch a process to update the Communications Act. And we're not alone in recognizing that we need to get Jazz Age laws synchronized with realities of the Internet Age.

In announcing the update of the Communications Act, Chairman Upton and I pointed out that the process would be deliberate and comprehensive. We want to give the complexities of these industries – these significant engines of our economy – their full due. Members across the aisle agreed. As a result, this draft bill only targets changes to address issues in the current system and defers consideration of greater reforms to the #CommActUpdate.

In developing this draft, we drew on the testimony of our hearings as well as extensive dialogue with industry. Every member has met with satellite operators, broadcasters, and cable operators among others to discuss the right policy and to get to the right outcome.

We have sought the input of our Democrat colleagues, and Ms. Eshoo and I have personally discussed the reforms contained in this bill. Chairman Upton has spoken with the ranking member as well.

Compromise and bipartisanship require hard work, and that's what we've been about - we've done it repeatedly, and will do so again. The work of this subcommittee has generated three unanimously passed bipartisan bills on Internet governance, FCC Consolidated Reporting, and FCC Process Reform. STELA Reauthorization can be another example of bipartisanship, but challenges remain. I, for one, feel very strongly about Section 4 of the discussion draft, which directs the FCC to do its job and complete the Quadrennial Review proceeding before moving forward piecemeal on media ownership issues. The hallmark of legitimate government is transparent and predictable process. That's why we are here today. I am disappointed that the Commission has failed to live up to this standard in its 2010 review of ownership in last weeks review, and in last week's announcement out of the FCC Media Bureau on JSAs.

The FCC's actions will have far-reaching consequences for the video industry; more importantly, the FCC's actions to deny public participation in the process are in violation of the public trust. But Democrats and Republicans alike have been wronged by the process failures at the FCC, and we can and should find common ground on this issue. I also urge Chairman Wheeler to take advantage of this time to consider whether the process improvement he has pledged should begin now – with the media ownership proceedings.

I am hopeful that we will be able to make a deal by tomorrow morning and look forward to advancing this important legislation.

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